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From the President Lord Rees of Ludlow
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RS policy document 39/06

Dear Mr McKee

Review of export control legislation

I wanted to thank you for writing to me regarding your Committee's review of export control legislation. We welcome your inquiry into the 2002 Export Control Act and the orders made under the Act.

The Society is committed to ensuring that academic freedoms are not unduly hindered by any new legislation or regulation. We raised a number of questions during the passage of the Export Control Act and its secondary legislation. In particular we stressed the following points:

- The scientific community appreciates its responsibilities in combating terrorism and weapons proliferation and consequently welcomes the majority of the legislation. The Society's long-standing commitment on this subject is illustrated by the meetings held in October 2004 on reducing the potential for the misuse of life science research and in September 2006 on science and technology developments relevant to the Biological & Toxin Weapons Convention. I have enclosed copies of the meeting reports for your information.
- Academics do not have a culture of dealing with export controls: this is something that will need to be built up over time.

We would like to stress that it is too soon to determine whether the Export Control Act is significantly affecting academic freedoms or scientific research. We would like to suggest that the Department of Trade & Industry should monitor this issue. We will continue to maintain our watching brief over all legislation or regulation that might unduly hinder scientific progress. If we discover any such issues we will bring them to the attention of your Committee, the Department of Trade & Industry or other Government Departments as appropriate. Please do not hesitate to get in touch if the Society could provide any further relevant information.

Yours

